Synopsis

Doctor of Philosophy in Music

An Analytical Study on the Compositions of the Renowned Violinist Thrissur C. Rajendran

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Introduction

Composers are the backbone of the musical tradition, as without their contributions and compositions, the traditions would cease to exist. Carnatic Music continues to thrive because compositions by contemporary composers are also keeping the tradition vibrant and appealing. There are various categories of composers in Carnatic Music, among which instrumentalist's composers and their compositions hold significant historical importance. In Carnatic Music, the contributions of numerous instrumental composers are invaluable and irreplaceable.

Among instrumental composers, the contributions of violinist composers are remarkable. Violinists in Carnatic music are highly talented and spontaneous artists, expected to accurately recreate the main artist's performance on the spot with minute nuances. Many talented Carnatic violinists have also made their mark as composers, but only a few have gained widespread acceptance for their compositions. The works of other composers remain mostly confined to their disciples, even though these violinists are popular as performers but have not projected themselves as composers. Thrissur C. Rajendran is one such distinguished violinist, having composed numerous Carnatic pieces in various musical forms. His compositions are currently performed only by a few of his direct disciples, a need for greater recognition and popularity.

Thrissur C. Rajendran

Thrissur C. Rajendran is one of Kerala's most accomplished and experienced violinists in the current era. The name of Thrissur C. Rajendran is well-known throughout the whole Carnatic music scene in Kerala. C. Rajendran is an eminent and has made substantial contributions to the field of music. He captured the hearts and minds of Carnatic music enthusiasts everywhere with the strings of his violin.

C. Rajendran is a 'A' Top graded artist of All India Radio (AIR) and a retired staff violin artist of AIR. He dedicated a significant part of his career to AIR, and he performed some incredible contributions to the organisation as a staff artist in various duties.

Moreover, C. Rajendran (CR) is a prolific composer who composed 70 compositions in many Carnatic music forms, including Varana, Kriti, Ragamalika, Padam, Bhajan, Tillana, and Mangalam. He created two new ragas and composed compositions in these ragas, as well as

composed in several rare ragas, uncommon talas, and some Hindustani ragas. Apart from the seventy Carnatic works, CR composed numerous other pieces, including devotional songs, light music songs, poems, patriotic songs, lullabies, and musical screen play.

This thesis work discusses and mostly focuses on Thrissur C. Rajendran's compositions.

Defining the Problem

Thrissur C. Rajendren is a well-known, both as a violinist and as an AIR Staff artist in the Carnatic music scene

Thrissur C.Rajendran is an artistic composer and composed many Carnatic compositions in various musical forms. But his compositions are need to be propagated more.

To define the problem of the thesis is to identify the musical contributions of C. Rajendren (CR) and to examine the depth and specifics the compositions of CR, through a detailed analysis.

Study area

C. Rajendran is a living legend, and the scope of this study is limited to his compositions from the first composition in 1972 up to 2023.

Ethical clearness

The study was approved from the Institutional Human Ethics Committee of Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women. The approval granted with IHEC Certificate number- **AUW/IHEC/MU-21-22/XPD-01.**

Objectives

Title of the thesis – **An analytical study on the compositions of the renowned violinist Thrissur C. Rajendran.**

The main objective or aim of this work is to comprehend the musical and lyrical beauty and other special features in the compositions of C. Rajendran and also to more propagate the compositions of him.

- to analyse the nuances in the musical and lyrical aspects of the compositions of C. Rajendran
- to discover the historical background and significance of the music, which associated with various temples, as well as the specific details about these temples as revealed in the compositions of C. Rajendran.

- to understand the different categories of ragas used by C. Rajendran in his compositions
- to exhibit the rhythmical or Tala in built intricacies in C.Rajendran's compositions
- to explore the embellishment and improvisational techniques used in his compositions
- to emphasize the contributions of C. Rajendran in the field of Carnatic Music as a Violinist, as an AIR staff artist, as a Composer and also as an innovator
- to more propagate the compositions of C. Rajendran

Scope of the study

The study focuses on Thrissur C. Rajendran's compositions and his contributions to Carnatic Music, aiming to emphasize the beauty of his musical works. It explores the musical intricacies, rhythmic variations, and lyrical nuances found in his compositions, particularly highlighting his use of uncommon ragas and talas. The study also aims to draw attention to the two ragas innovated by CR. Furthermore, the inspirational contributions on temples dedicated to specific deities are revealed and also to explore the lesser known Kshetra Kritis. The study endeavours to raise awareness of these temples through his musical compositions.

Thesis statement

C. Rajendran's selected compositions are analysed on the basis of musical and lyrical aspects, historical background of particular temples and to more propagate the compositions.

Resources

Primary sources

The main resource of this study is the hand written notations of the compositions of C. Rajendran and the audio recordings of the compositions by the direct disciples of CR.

- The notations of the compositions of C. Rajendran (Manuscripts directly collected from C. Rajendran)
- The direct discussion with the composer
- Audio recordings of the compositions rendered by the direct disciples of C. Rajendran
- Album – 'Swami Ayyappan' composed by C. Rajendran, released by Manorama Music.

Secondary sources

- Editorial articles on C. Rajendran
- Books and articles for general aspects
- Discussions with other musicians, colleagues of AIR, and direct disciples of C. Rajendran

Methodology

Title of the thesis – **An analytical study on the compositions of the renowned violinist Thrissur C. Rajendran**

Types of methods adopted under this tittle are:

Biographical Research

- Compilation of detailed biography of C. Rajendran, covering key events, milestones and significant moments in his life and career.
- Described C. Rajendran's musical contributions, including his performances, compositions, innovations, violin techniques and on the impact on the Carnatic music tradition

Classification Criteria

- According to the criteria fixed by the musicologists, fixed the criteria for classifying the ragas used in C. Rajendran's compositions, based on their scales, melodic structure and characteristic features

Historical context

- Exploring the historical background and the descriptions of the Kshetras mentioned in C. Rajendran's compositions.
- Revealing the religious practices, rituals, and devotional traditions associated with these temples to provide insights into C. Rajendran's creative process.

Analytical Framework

- Analysing selected compositions based on ragas, talas, lyrics, and other aesthetic
- Analyse the melodic entity and rhythmic innovations in the compositions
- Analyse the embellishments and improvisational techniques used.

Chapters

The thesis divided into four chapters **excluding Introduction and Conclusion.**

Chapter one : **Life and Contributions of Thrissur C. Rajendran**

Chapter two **: Ragas Utilized in the Compositions of C. Rajendran**

Chapter three **:The lyrical Analysis on Kshetra Compositions**

Chapter four : **Dhatu, Matu Analysis on the Compositions in the Aspects of Concert Marga/Paddhati**

Chapter one - Life and Contributions of Thrissur C. Rajendran

The first chapter of the thesis delves into the life and incredible contributions of CR, a renowned artist in the world of Carnatic Music. It provides a comprehensive overview of his journey as a Violin artist, his tenure as an All India Radio (AIR) staff artist, and his work as a composer. The chapter covers various aspects of CR's life, including:

- **Birth and Family**: An account of CR's early life, family background, and upbringing.
- **Life Stories and Musical Background**: Insight into the significant events and influences that shaped his musical career.
- **Choice of Instrument**: The reasons behind CR's decision to choose the violin as his primary instrument.
- **First Performance**: Details of his first performance and early experiences in the music world.
- **Guidance of the Guru**: The mentorship and training he received from his guru, which played a crucial role in his development as a musician.
- **Career as a Full-Time Violin Artist**: His journey to become a professional violinist, including his experiences as both an accompanist and a solo performer.
- **Uniqueness in Playing Style**: An exploration of the distinctive elements of CR's violin playing technique.
- **Experience with Legendary Musicians**: Collaborations and performances with other legendary musicians in the Carnatic music realm.
- **Foreign Performances**: Highlights of his international performances and the global recognition he received.

- **Teaching Experiences**: His role as a violin teacher and his famous students mentioned.
- **Contributions as a Composer**: C. Rajendran composed 70 Carnatic compositions in various musical forms and also some other songs too.
- **Contributions to All India Radio**: His significant impact as a staff artist in AIR and his involvement in various radio programs and contributions as composer.
- **Albums and CDs Released**: A list of his recorded works, including albums and CDs.
- **Awards and Honours**: The accolades and recognitions he has received throughout his career.

This chapter serves as a comprehensive introduction to CR's life and achievements, setting the stage for a deeper exploration of his contributions to Carnatic music in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter two - Ragas Utilized in the Compositions of C. Rajendran

In the second chapter, the classification of ragas used in C. Rajendran's compositions are thoroughly explained.

Raga forms the backbone, foundation, and heart of Indian Classical Music, playing a crucial role in providing structure, evoking emotions, shaping various musical forms, and allowing for improvisation. Based on unique note combinations, melodic structure, and associated moods and emotions, ragas are categorized different groups such as Mela and Janya.

- C. Rajendran totally composed 14 mela ragas. Among them six are in suddha madhyama and eight are in prathi madhyama melas.
- C. Rajendran composed 53 janya ragas, these ragas are classified into subcategories like Upanga, Bhashanga, Vakra, and Varjya ragas and so on.
- The researcher details the arohana and avarohana of each raga, the mela number according to the katapayadi sankhya, and lists the compositions by their starting words, raga, and tala.
- The chapter provides details about the rare ragas used in the compositions of CR like Veenavadhini, Ganavaridhi, Shekhara Chandrika or Subhali, Shivashakti, Sudha Todi and so on. Explaining the usage rare ragas in Carnatic music and listing the compositions of CR in rare ragas along with their arohana, avarohana, and mela numbers.

- Additionally, CR's compositions in Hindustani ragas are discussed, with concise details about raga aspects in Hindustani music and a list of his compositions in these ragas, including their arohana, avarohana, and thaats.
- C. Rajendran, invented two new ragas named Hariharapriya and Mayamayi. The scholar provides details about these ragas, such as their arohana and avarohana, mela numbers, and the names of compositions in these ragas. The chapter also explains the circumstances behind the naming of these ragas, the selection of their arohana and avarohana, their unique features, and their purpose.

This chapter emphases the different categories of ragas utilized in the compositions of CR.

Chapter three - The Lyrical Analysis on Kshetra Compositions

In the third chapter, the Kshetra compositions of C. Rajendran are highlighted. Music and temples are connected, with music being an integral part of daily and annual rituals in temples. This chapter briefly discusses the influence of bhakti in Carnatic Music, the relationship between Carnatic Music and temples, the significance of Sthala or Kshetra Kritis in Carnatic music.

C. Rajendran composed a total of 28 compositions dedicated to eight different temples in Kerala, including both well-known and lesser-known temples. This chapter provides a detailed description of each temple's location and surroundings, its history, the story behind its name, the unique features of the main deity and other sub-deities, the main rituals and offerings, daily poojas and main offerings, important festivals, musical significance and festivals, other distinctive features, and CR's compositions for each of these eight temples.

- In his Kshetra compositions, C. Rajendran skilfully incorporates the names of the deities, stories related to the deities, temple offerings, names of places, and descriptions of the temple surroundings.
- The compositions for lesser-known and rural temples like Kakkad Ganapati, Mookuthala, and Poovani Shiva temple are unique and provide insights into the history, geography, special characteristics of the deities, and stories behind these temples.
- The compositions for more prominent and regionally significant temples like Koodalmanikyam, Paramekkavu, and Pamba Ganapati also highlight their spiritual and cultural importance.

- In the Kshetra compositions, the majority are dedicated to Sabarimala and Guruvayur temples. He composed many compositions in different musical forms on Lord Ayyappa of Sabarimala and these compositions are unique, incorporated many Namavalis of Lord Ayyappa
- The composer's ishta deva is Lord Guruvayurappa. Through his compositions dedicated to Lord Guruvayurappa, he vividly describes the Lord's beauty and narrates his divine attributes.
- The compositions on goddesses in various temples beautifully depict their different avataras.

This chapter analysed the lyrical aspects of various temples mentioned in CR's compositions

Chapter four - Dhatu, Matu Analysis on the Compositions in the Aspects of Concert Marga/Paddhati

In the fourth chapter, the compositions of C. Rajendran are studied based on the concert Marga or Paddhati. The chapter details the specifics of modern concert paddhati, describing each musical form, its characteristics, categories, and importance in Carnatic music concerts. It provides a comprehensive analysis of CR's compositions as they are presented in concert paddhati.

- In the musical form Varna, six out of the 23 Varnas composed by CR are analysed in terms of raga, tala, gamaka, lyrics, svarakshara, and yati patterns. CR's Varnas display a high level of raga bhava, enriched by gamakas. They feature mathematical korvai svara patterns in Mukthayi svara and charana svaras, beautiful sahithya with limited lyrics, Mudra, Prasa, Svaraksharas, and various Yati phrases.
- Among the 37 Kritis composed by CR, ten are selected for detailed analysis based on raga, tala, gamakas, and decorative angas like sangati, samashti charanam, chitta svara, madhyamakala sahitya, and lyrical aspects such as meaning, theme, language, mudra, prasa, and prosodic elements like svarakshara and yati.
- In his Ragamalika, CR skilfully blends four ragas, including two rare ragas (Surya and Subhali) and two deshya ragas(Brindavani and Sindhu Bhairavi), which are not traditionally allied. Compared to his other compositions, the music, tala, and sangatis of this Ragamalika are simpler and lighter.

- The Padam by CR explores a different theme and story, portraying Vipralambha Sringara, the pain, and sorrow of the heroine separated from the hero. The composer chosen Hindustani raga Jayjayvanti to evoke Karuna rasa, beautifully expressing the heroine's emotions. The composer executed the vilambitha laya in Mishra chapu tala stunningly.
- In the Bhajan, CR combines the sweetness of raga Madhuvanti with some complex phrases, making it distinct from other regular Bhajans. The lyrics and tala are also impressive in this composition.
- Concerts typically end with the crisp musical form Tillana. CR's Tillana is in crisp jathis in different rhythmic mathematical patterns and the usage of a Hindustani raga-Kalavati, making it as an excellent one.
- The Mangalam Sloka of CR beautifully describes Lord Ayyappa in Sabarimala in Malayalam, exploring the raga Suruti pleasingly.

This chapter deliberated the raga bhava, tala executions, gamaka prayogas, sangati variations, the lyrical beauties, prosodic enactments and the other unique features of CR's compositions in detail.

Research findings

- The raga bhava is a predominant feature in CR's compositions and they provide a clear reference to the ragas that composed.
- The Variations in Sangatis from first to the last Sangati are in a progressive development manner and it gives variations to each and every word in a line. As a violinist C. Rajendran used many instrumental types of svara phrases in Sangatis in his compositions.
- The composer used many Gamakas, appropriate to evoke svarupa and emotions of the ragas and also included some instrumental, Violin gamakas.
- The application of tala or rhythmic aspects in CR compositions has also found some specialties. In the musical form Varna, in the Mukthayi svaras and Charana svaras, there are some exclusive mathematical korvai svara patterns are assimilated and each of these patterns are connected with Pallavi and Charana cleverly.

- C. Rajendran composed Kritis in some not widely used talas like, Sankeerna Chpau, Mishra Jampa, Khanta Jathi Triputa and so on. C. Rajendran very much interested to compose in Chpu talas and he used 19 Chapu talas(13 Mishra chapu, 5 in Khanda chapu and one in Sankeerana chapu) in his compositions.
- The lyrical excellence in CR compositions are interconnected with Music. The bhakti or devotion is the predominant theme in his compositions.
- The authentic proficiency in languages of the composer are explicit. The influences of Sanskrit language, the way of carry out the language are some of the specialisms. Sixty two compositions are in Sanskrit and 8 compositions are in Malayalam of CR.
- The composer comprised the Vaggeyakara Mudra (Raja) in all the compositions and also included the Raga Mudra in most of the compositions without breaking the meaning of the lyrics.
- There are some prosodies like Prasa, Svaraksharas and Yati patterns found extensively in CR's composition.
- The Kshetra compositions of CR are distinctive, they deliver description of the temples, deity, surroundings, main offerings, stories related to the temple and so on.
- C. Rajendran is the only composer who composed Kshetra Kritis on the the following temples like **Mookuthala , Paramekkavu , Koodalmanikyam, Kakkad Ganapati , Poovani Shiva temple** are unique.
- C. Rajendran is the only composer who composed in the Carnatic musical forms – Varna to Tillana, a group of compositions for a **concert paddhati on Sabarimala Ayyappa**. He included some synonyms of Ayyappa that are not usually seen in the other Ayyappa compositions.
- In the Ksherta compositions, the majority of the compositions on Lord Ayyappa in Sabarimala temple and on Lord Guruvayurappa in Guruvayur temple. It will enrich unity and pride among the people, when it is staged or listened through the recordings.
- The Kshetra compositions of CR reveals the spiritual, socio cultural significance of the state Kerala
- In general, compositions in rare ragas are few. However, C. Rajendran has composed in several rare ragas, such as Veenavadhini, Shekhara Chandrika or Subhali, Shivashakti, Ganavaridhi, and Sudha Todi. These compositions provide valuable references for such rare ragas.

- The Hindustani raga compositions in Kalavati, Bhinnashadj, Jayjayvanti, and Mishra Shivaranjini offer a unique experience.
- The two ragas Hariharapriya and Mayamayi, created by C. Rajendran, are significant assets to Carnatic music.
- C. Rajendran impacted for the development of the instrument Violin in 20th century of Kerala and his contributions to the world of Music as a violinist, as an AIR staff artist, as a composer and also as an innovator are innumerable and highly appreciable.

Conclusion

Changes over time is applicable to all fields for betterment and extending to the present time. Like other fields, Carnatic Music welcomes and incorporates inevitable changes and innovations. Many composers create new ragas and composed various musical forms. New composers and their compositions need to be showcased and performed more frequently.

C. Rajendran is a prolific composer, who composed seventy compositions in various musical forms in Carnatic Music in which, the researcher has selected 45 compositions for analysis.

The research work elucidates the contributions of CR to the field of music, highlighting the specialties, uniqueness, and essence embedded within his compositions for musicians and music lovers. It also endeavours to promote his compositions to a broader audience. Each composition by CR is regarded as a valuable asset to Carnatic music.

Scope for the further study

- The upcoming compositions of C. Rajendran can be used for future studies
- The comparative study between his compositions and another composer's (instrumentalist's) compositions also provides a wide scope
- The study only on Varnas or Kritis also give splendid scope
- The researcher analyzed only the selected compositions of C.Rajendran. The excluded compositions can be analyzed.

Publications

Published two paper in UGC Cared Group – I Journals

1. K.Sruthy. and Dr.V.Janaka Maya Devi, 2022, "Analytical study on the composition – Nandhakishoram by Thrissur C. Rajendran in the Raga Bridavani", *Anhad – Lok*, Vol.16, Pp. 24- 29 (ISSN- 2349-137X).
2. K.Sruthy. and Dr.V.Janaka Maya Devi, 2023, "Vandhanam Keralmbe – A Special Tribute Composition to Kerala", *Swar Sindhu*, Vol.11, No.2, Pp. 140-149 (ISSN- 2320-7175).

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